

Tree of Knowledge

DUXBURY CLIPPER

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In the old Colonial days there used to be a tree at Duxbury, Massachusetts that was called the "Tree of Knowledge." It seems that in those days it was quite customary to leave letters and parcels at an oak tree standing at the junction of the Massachusetts Bay Path (now Route 3) and the highway running through Tinkertown. It is believed that at first the letters may have been picked up by what they used to call "runners" or people who travelled between towns, but anyway it was an informal arrangement. But on May 12, 1775, the first Post Office was established at Plymouth by the Provincial Congress with William Watson as Postmaster. Mounted mail carriers began to make regular trips in June of that year, and it was

about this time that the sturdy oak tree in what they called the Tarkln district of Duxbury, became known as the "Tree of Knowledge." A box was nailed to the tree for the convenience of the people in that vicinity and its name became widespread.

Prior to this most of the mail was carried between Plymouth and Boston by mailing packets. Timothy Goodwin and Joseph Howland were the first official joint mail carriers. This has been called by some historians, the first rural mail box. It could not be called the first Rural Free Delivery, because it was really not a free service, as the riders had to be paid by those whose mail was delivered from the tree.